GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

SAN JUAN

October 13, 1942

Circular Letter No. 77

To : Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents of
Schools, Elementary and Rural Junior High School
Principals, and Teachers of English Projects

Re : ENGLISH PROJECT PROCEDURES

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The following material is offered in answer to some of
the questions that have arisen in conferences on the English
project. Due to the scarcity of paper, it is impossible to
print one copy of this letter for each teacher, but it may
be copied in any school district possessing the necessary
material to do so. Principals are requested to discuss the
contents in detail at meetings with their English teachers.

What is the difference between the English project and the personal and community problem?

The aim of the personal and community problem is to
prepare the child to face, to analyze, and, if possible,
to solve personal and community problems. In this work,
practice in language skills is incidental. The English
project, on the contrary, is aimed primarily at helping
the child to learn English. Any socializing results are
incidental.

How flexible is the time allotment for English?

The time allotment for English is as flexible as
the needs of the group demand. There is no definite
dividing line that may not be crossed when the
situation demands it. For example, if the
language period is to be used for drill work, it
will, in accordance with accepted pedagogical
principles, be a great deal shorter than forty
minutes. If, on a given day, the needs of the
group require it, the teacher may lengthen the

reading period by shortening the language or project
period. If the class in projects goes on an excursion,
the entire time allotted for English may be used for the
trip. Even if the reading, language, and project classes
do not come one after another, the teacher may make the
necessary changes.

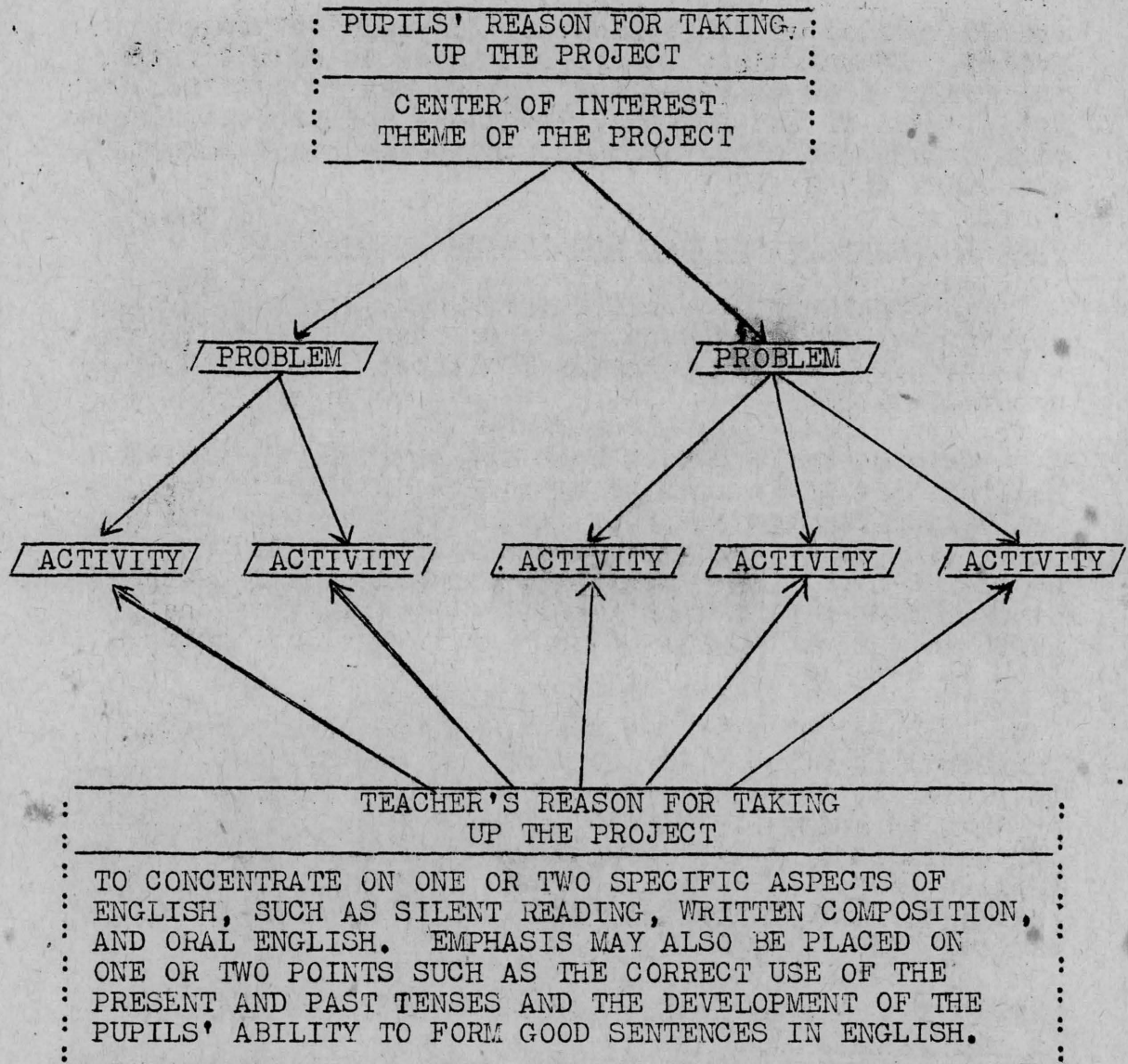### What is meant by "reason for taking up project?"

It should be made clear that there are really two
reasons for taking up the project: the pupils' and the
teacher's. Both are important; without both there is
no project.

The teacher's reason consists of those skills in
English that he intends to emphasize, utilizing the
activities for his purpose. If he does not use the
activities in this way--if they are not focused on
those language skills that he intends to develop--the
project degenerates into a series of activities that
serve no purpose as far as systematic English instruc-
tion is concerned.

The pupils' reason consists of the interest they
feel in connection with the theme of the project. If
they are not interested in the project--if it is imposed
on them in spite of the fact that they do not demonstrate
any desire for it--the activities become a series of
English lessons in which the only motivating force is
whatever interest-arousing devices the teacher sees fit
to introduce in each.

How are the teacher's and pupils' reasons coordinated in the English project?

The diagram below gives a visual image of how the
teacher's and pupils' reasons are coordinated in the
English project. While examining this drawing keep in
mind the fact that, although the teacher's reason for
taking up the project is found at the last part of the
diagram, it occupies this position for purposes of
convenience only. The pupils' reason for taking up the
project is found at the beginning of the drawing, because,
even though the teacher may have his aim in mind long
before the project has been selected, he cannot begin
to effect it systematically until the center of interest
has been established, problems selected, and the activ-
ities begun. The teacher's reason is just as important
as the pupils'.

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: PUPILS' REASON FOR TAKING :
:      UP THE PROJECT        :
:..........................:
:    CENTER OF INTEREST      :
:    THEME OF THE PROJECT    :
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/PROBLEM/   /PROBLEM/

/ACTIVITY/ /ACTIVITY/   /ACTIVITY/ /ACTIVITY/   /ACTIVITY/

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:        TEACHER'S REASON FOR TAKING                :
:              UP THE PROJECT                        :
:..................................................:
: TO CONCENTRATE ON ONE OR TWO SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF  :
: ENGLISH, SUCH AS SILENT READING, WRITTEN COMPOSITION, :
: AND ORAL ENGLISH.  EMPHASIS MAY ALSO BE PLACED ON :
: ONE OR TWO POINTS SUCH AS THE CORRECT USE OF THE  :
: PRESENT AND PAST TENSES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE :
: PUPILS' ABILITY TO FORM GOOD SENTENCES IN ENGLISH. :
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Note the following points:

1. The pupils' reason for taking up a project--the desire
   to develop a theme that interests the majority of the
   group--may be developed in the project period, in some
   other class, or anywhere else around the school. A
   story read in the reading period, a difference of
   opinion about any topic of interest, the children's
   interest in an object or picture brought to class by
   the teacher, a desire to discuss an occurrence in

some other class or outside the school--any one of
these may provide an opportunity for the teacher to
suggest an English project to investigate the matter
further. If the response of the majority of the group
is favorable, the project may be considered as selected.

2. Once the project has been chosen, the teacher should
   lead the pupils to see that certain things have to be
   decided, or found out. The group ought to be led to
   list these points in the form of direct questions, or
   problems. The class should see that the solution of
   these problems is essential to the effective carrying
   out of the project. This provides pupil motivation
   for the activities that follow. Thus all of the
   subsequent procedure is made purposeful in the eyes
   of the children. For example, the children can see
   that it is necessary to visit, discuss, and read
   about the grocery store to solve the problem, "What
   is done in the grocery store?" A project may include
   any number of problems according to the ability and
   grade level of the group.

3. Activities in the English project are, as far as the
   children are concerned, carried on for the exclusive
   purpose of solving the problems to be considered.
   If possible, the teacher should select the activities
   with the help of the group. If he does not do this,
   he should at least make sure that they are aware of
   why they are speaking, reading, writing, and listening
   to English. Each activity in itself may be considered
   as an English lesson which may last for a single day
   or more. Each problem may involve any number of
   activities.

4. The teacher's reason for taking up the project should
   be stated in specific terms. Although any project may
   involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening to
   English, the aim should be to concentrate on one or
   two of these four language arts. For example, if the
   teacher's aim is to emphasize written composition and
   silent reading, he should make sure that many of the
   activities in the project involve these two skills.
   In addition to this, he may insist on the correct
   practice of one or two points like the correct use
   of the third person singular, present tense.

The child, as stated above, is led to see the activities as means of solving problems that interest him. For example, a fifth-grader may feel that he is learning the English names for the parts of the human body, in order to be able to develop a project on first aid. The teacher, however, sees this activity for what it really is--a vocabulary lesson. In the same way, a third-grader thinks that he is writing four or five short sentences to tell the other children about his pet; but the teacher has really initiated this activity as a lesson in written composition focused on the construction of correct sentences.

May activities be carried on outside of the project class?

Yes. If the group is going to read a story in the project, the reading class may be used for the purpose. The language class may sometimes be used for the teaching of vocabulary, although such teaching may also be done in the project class. This matter is left to the good judgment of the teacher.

What sort of written work should be done by the teacher of English projects?

The written work done by the teacher in his project work may vary in individual cases. However, on finishing the project, he should have enough definite facts to present in detail the following information:

1. The title of the project.

2. The teacher's reason for taking it up--the aim.

3. The pupils' reason for taking it up.

4. The problems considered, each accompanied by the activities carried out to solve it.

5. The outcomes in terms of English concepts and skills.

6. The vocabulary used (basic and non-basic).

7. References (in the same manner as in the projects in the bulletin, The English Project Period in the Elementary School).

The method of doing this is optional. However,
two examples of procedures being followed by different
teachers in the districts visited are offered here.
These procedures might be called historical records,
since they are aimed at providing a complete, detailed
record of the progress of the project. The first is a
form of outline. The teacher fills in the title, the
pupils' and teacher's reason for taking up the project,
and the first problems selected. Under each problem
he leaves blank spaces to be filled in with a record of
the activities (in terms of English procedures) carried
out to solve it. These activities should be stated in
terms of how English was used. At the left of the
activities he writes in the date on which each was taken
up in class. Under each activity a record is kept of
materials and the general procedure to be followed.
Spaces are also left for the outcomes, vocabulary, and
references. The result is as follows:

TITLE

Reasons for taking up project:

    Teacher's--(Fill in beforehand, if possible)

    Pupils' --(Fill in after project is selected)

Problems considered:

    1. (Fill in first problem taken up)

  (date) a. (Fill in first activity to solve
        first problem)

        (List materials and procedures here.
        Give names of songs or stories used.)

  (date) b. (Fill in second activity here)

        (List materials and procedures here)

    2. (Fill in second problem taken up)

      a. (Fill in first activity)

        (List materials and procedures)

b. (Fill in second activity)

(List materials and procedures)

etc.

Outcomes: (Fill in when outcomes are achieved.)
           Only outcomes related to English
           growth should be recorded here.

Vocabulary used:

   Basic: (This section may be filled in at the
           end of each activity)

   Non-Basic:

   References: (Fill in this section as the books
               are used. Give the pages and
               other information as in the sample
               projects in the project bulletin)

If a teacher uses the above form of outline, he should
keep the following points in mind:

1. Two activities may be carried out in one day. Date both.

2. If an activity takes more than one day, the dates
   should be given.

3. Materials necessary for the efficient carrying out
   of an activity should be listed under it. These
   should be comprised of those items normally included
   in a daily lesson plan:

   a. A brief statement of the procedure to be followed.

   b. The most important questions to be used in
      developing the activity.

   c. Names of stories and songs to be used.

4. Space should be left for any additional problems or
   activities that the pupils may suggest in the course
   of the project.

The other method being used by some teachers is very similar to the above. It may be kept on the blackboard, on a large sheet of paper, or in a looseleaf notebook. It is a diagram of the work being done.

The teacher draws the diagram and fills it in as below:

TITLE:				
REASONS FOR TAKING UP THE PROJECT:				
TEACHER'S - - - - - -				
PUPILS' - - - - - -				

PROBLEMS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	VOCABULARY	REFERENCES
1.	1.	(If any are observed, fill in here)	(Fill in daily)	(Fill in when the books are used)
	2.			
	3.			
	4.			
	5.			
2.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
	4.			
	5.			
3.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
	4.			
	5.			

If the above outline is used, the following points should be kept in mind:

1. The dates for the various activities should be filled in.

2. Blanks should be left for additional activities or problems that the class may suggest.

3. A separate daily plan for materials would be advisable, unless it is possible to include them in the diagram.

Whether daily plans should be made, in addition to the record of the work being done, is, to a great extent, a matter of local supervisory policy. However, the teacher should have some written record, either in the outline of the project or in a daily plan, of the materials he intends to use and the procedure he is going to follow in carrying on each activity.

What are basic words?

Basic words are those words most frequently used for oral and written expression. They are indispensable to that person who wishes to acquire the minimum essentials for satisfactory ability to read, write, speak, and understand a language. They are those words which we continually encounter in everyday conversation, written material, and printed matter. Basic words are those for which simpler, commoner ones cannot be substituted without losing the necessary shade of meaning.

Words used very frequently in a given district may be said to be basic in that district, although in some other section they may not be essential. Thus, in Puerto Rico, words like "sugar cane" and "grapefruit" may be said to be basic, while the same words would not be basic in Massachusetts, where they are infrequently used.

The two thousand words found at the back of the project bulletin are considered as basic in all parts of the world. They should be mastered eventually. They do not necessarily include all those words basic in Puerto Rico. However, for practical purposes, the teacher of English projects may refer to them to decide if those words encountered in his project are basic or not.

<u>Should the procedure suggested in the project bulletin</u>
<u>be followed to the letter in the third grade or in</u>
<u>retarded groups in the upper grades?</u>

The procedure followed in project work in any
grade must suit the ability of the children. Obviously
it will not be possible to secure many suggestions from
retarded pupils or from children at a low grade level.
Even in some of the brighter groups the response may
not be overwhelming at the beginning. However, the
teacher should try to stimulate suggestions every time
he begins a new project. Experience has shown that,
even in those groups possessing a very limited vocab-
ulary, the response will be more spontaneous as the
children become more used to the procedure.

Suggestions for teaching children of limited
ability are offered, as follows:

1. Base the first few projects on stories read
   in the reading class.

2. Try, in a systematic way, to build a basic
   reading and speaking vocabulary.

3. Introduce projects in which this vocabulary
   may be used.

4. Be sure that the problems to be solved in the
   projects are simple enough for the children to
   understand.

5. Be sure that the problems are logical in
   sequence and few in number--three should be
   enough.

6. Be sure that interest is maintained. Don't
   force things. Keep the projects short. The
   work should be easy--within the pupils' range
   of achievement.

7. Emphasize oral English.

8. Give the children a chance to show whether or
   not they understand. Keep trying to stimulate
   the children to make suggestions.

9. Supply an abundance of visual material and prepare many attractive devices. Try to be original in this.

10. Try to coordinate the work in the English reading, language, and project classes.

How may English projects be classified?

English projects may be divided into three classes:

1. Remedial projects--projects which are taken up with the aim of giving the pupils practice in those phases of English in which they have showed a definite weakness. For example, in a group displaying lack of ability in letter-writing, it would be advisable to begin a project in which many activities involving this phase of the language are included.

2. Practice projects--projects in which the pupils are given an opportunity to practice those skills acquired in the English class. For example, if the pupils have read a story which involves the vocabulary of the family, a project on this topic might be taken up to fix the words learned. Or, if a sixth grade has studied sentence construction, a project which includes activities involving the spoken and written use of sentences might be started.

3. Expression projects--projects taken up for the purpose of stimulating spontaneous oral and written expression in general. Since most projects will involve this phase of English to a certain extent, it is recommended that not more than two or three of this type be taken up in the course of the school year, except in the third or fourth grade.

What projects are being developed by other teachers? How were they introduced? What was the teacher's aim?

GRADE III

A GROCERY STORE IN SCHOOL

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The class had just finished reading a story about a
birthday party. In the discussion that followed pupils
answered questions concerning stores where one can buy
presents and other things. The teacher asked them, "Do
you want to play store?" The reaction was very favorable,
and the project was started.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To teach the vocabulary used in the grocery store.

2. Teach the children to count to 100.

3. To teach the children to read tags, labels, and
   directions found on packages and cans.

4. To stimulate oral expression through conversation,
   songs, and games, in order to fix the vocabulary
   learned.

5. To develop sentence sense in oral and written English.

FRIENDS IN STORIES

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The teacher showed the children pictures of some of the
characters from "Mother Goose" and other stories and rhymes.
He asked them if they would like to read about the animals
and people in the pictures. The children expressed their
desire to do so.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To stimulate a desire to read.

2. To improve the children's ability to interpret
   material read.

3. To increase the children's speaking ability through oral drill on the story vocabulary.

4. To improve the children's ability to use correct sentences orally.

5. To teach the correct use of "this" and "that."

OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The children had read a story about pets. The teacher asked them if they had pets at home. In the conversation that followed, it was decided to have a pet show at school.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To teach the names of domestic animals.

2. To use this vocabulary in oral and written form.

3. To stimulate a desire to read.

4. To improve the children's ability in written composition.

5. To teach the possessive pronouns,

GRADE IV

A RADIO STATION IN SCHOOL

(Excellent results are being obtained from this project. It is a very desirable one, especially in the lower grades.)

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The teacher had a radio brought to the room. The class listened to an English program. The teacher asked the pupils about their radios at home and the programs they like best. He asked them if they would like to have a radio station in the classroom. The response was definitely favorable.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To stimulate spontaneous oral expression through the use of an imitation microphone.

2. To increase the children's speaking vocabulary.

3. To teach the correct use of interrogative pronouns.

A COLUMBUS DAY PROGRAM

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The teacher asked the group some questions about Columbus. He told them that October 12 is set aside to commemorate the adventuresome spirit of this man. He asked them if they would like to have a program. The class voted in favor of this.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To give the children practice in silent reading and written composition.

2. To emphasize the correct use of the present and past tenses.

3. To teach the correct use of the interrogative adverbs.

GAMES WE LIKE TO PLAY

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The teacher asked the children about the games they like to play. He asked them if they would like to learn some games in English. They expressed much interest in the idea, and the project was started.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To develop the pupils' ability in written composition through the writing of directions for playing games.

2. To develop, through the reading of directions, the children's ability to comprehend.

3. To teach the use of verbs of action, through dramatization and conversation.

GRADE V

HOW POLICEMEN HELP

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

One of the boys at the school threw stones at a policeman at recess. He was punished by the principal, and the whole school was aware of the fact. The teacher of English projects and his group discussed the boy's misbehavior. He asked the children if they would like to read and investigate to see how policemen help in the community. It was decided to do this.

Teacher's reason for taking up project:

1. To improve the children's ability in reading for information.

2. To teach the vocabulary used in connection with policemen.

3. To improve the children's ability to understand spoken English by offering oral information in connection with topics discussed.

4. To develop the pupils' ability to form interrogative sentences in English.

A CLASSROOM LIBRARY

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The pupils had displayed much interest in reading. There were many books in the room. These were used for supplementary reading, but the pupils were not allowed to take them from the school. The teacher asked the group some questions about libraries. Some of them did not know very much about this subject, so he explained why such institutions exist. He asked them if they would like to have a library in the classroom and borrow books to take home. The children were very interested in the idea, so they decided to have a classroom library.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To give the children practice in reading and oral expression.

2. To teach the vocabulary of leisure time activities.

3. To emphasize the pronunciation of the final consonants.

4. To give the children practice in the use of the following tenses:

       a. Present
       b. Past
       c. Present progressive
       d. Past progressive

HOW WATER HELPS US

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

In the class on personal and community problems the pupils had studied about water and its uses. They were interested and talked freely about the topic. The teacher noticed this and, in the English project period, he suggested a project on how water helps us. He prefaced his suggestion with questions which gave the children a chance to show what they knew about the topic. They were very much in favor of starting the project.

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To teach the vocabulary necessary for discussing and writing about water and its uses.

2. To improve the children's ability to read for information.

3. To improve the children's ability in written expression.

4. To give the children an opportunity to improve their ability in understanding spoken English.

5. To teach the children how to form interrogative sentences and to use the prepositions "to," "in," "on," "at," and "under."

A SAVINGS BANK OF OUR OWN

Pupils' reason for taking up project:

The teacher began a class discussion on the use of money. The children offered many ideas, but did not mention saving for the future. The teacher asked them if they knew what a bank is. They discussed the local savings institution. The teacher asked the pupils if they would like to have a bank in the classroom and they said they would. It was decided to visit the local bank to see what would have to be done. (In towns without a bank, the postal savings department could be visited.)

Teacher's reasons for taking up project:

1. To teach the vocabulary necessary for the discussion of the saving and spending of money.

2. To stimulate written expression in order to improve the pupils' ability in written composition. This was to be done through the preparation of rules and regulations, blank forms, and signs for the classroom bank.

3. To provide drill on such expressions as "at fifty cents," "three for five," "to make a deposit," "how much," "how many," and "to cash a check."

How can the teacher help the pupils to maintain interest in the course of a project?

The following suggestions, gathered from observation of projects in the classroom, are offered to answer this question:

1. Be sure that the project chosen is really a theme that interests the majority of the children. Don't force your ideas on the pupils, if they are obviously not desirous of taking up a project you may suggest. The response should be at least fairly enthusiastic and sincere.

2. Keep the problems at the children's level.

3. Be sure that the activities carried on are not too difficult for the class. Remember that a child may be very interested in a topic, but he will speedily lose this interest, if the activities are far beyond his range of achievement in English.

4. Have the problem under consideration written on the blackboard every day.

5. If you are visited, treat the visitor as a member of the group. Tell the children that he has come to take part, not to watch from the sidelines. If you can use him, have him contribute to the activity being carried on. This helps to keep the class atmosphere informal--a quality essential to the effectiveness of the project.

6. Don't have the visitor sit at the side or front of the room, facing the class. Have him facing in the same direction as the rest of the group.

7. Give the children plenty of opportunity to move by supplying them with a reason for doing so. Let them do work at the blackboard. Have them sing in groups at the front of the room. Form competitive groups, when possible. Restlessness and loss of interest are often caused by too much sitting, because they need muscular as well as mental exercise.

8. Praise original and resourceful children. This stimulates the others to be more spontaneous.

9. Show by your attitude that you are participating, not dictating.

How can teachers help to improve the English project program?

Teachers can help in the development of an improved English project program by:

1. Sending their completed projects to the Central Office.

2. Referring their problems to the supervisor of English projects, for consideration and solution.

3. Refusing to get discouraged, if their groups
   do not respond well from the very beginning.
   The children will need time to get accustomed
   to this new aspect of English instruction.

4. Submitting suggestions they may consider helpful.

   All completed projects and suggestions submitted
will be carefully considered. At various intervals
during the school year, samples of projects carried
out, as well as additional material for teacher
orientation, will be published by this office. All
are urged to contribute their ideas to this effort.

                    Very truly yours,

               (Signed) JOSÉ M. GALLARDO .
                    Commissioner of Education